

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 246 769

HE 017 492

AUTHOR Lucas, J. A.
TITLE Identifying and Evaluating Non-Monetary Alumni Resources for Local Colleges. AIR 1984 Annual Forum Paper.
PUB DATE May 84
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research (24th, Fort Worth, TX, May 6-9, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Alumni; College Graduates; *Community Colleges; *Coordination; Followup Studies; Higher Education; Personnel Needs; *Recruitment; *Volunteers
IDENTIFIERS *AIR Forum

ABSTRACT

Alumni service resources available to a large Chicago-area community college were studied. A six-year followup study was conducted at Harper College with a population of students who completed 48 or more semester hours during the 1974-1975 academic year. A sample of 543 alumni were asked whether they would be willing to provide a variety of services to the college. Names of alumni who were interested in helping the college were provided to school staff. After a six-month period, staff members were interviewed as to the coordination effort required to reach the alumni and use their services. They also indicated if these services were beneficial. The cost of the survey and the coordination effort was estimated, and a dollar figure was placed on the services received. In addition, interviews were conducted with staff who had been using alumni services through informal channels over the years. It was concluded that followup studies to identify alumni volunteers are relatively inexpensive, but the substantial benefits that can be derived from alumni services are substantial. This is illustrated by a description of how the legal technology program at the college uses alumni. The key to any successful alumni volunteer program seems to be effective coordination. (SW)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED246769

IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING NON-MONETARY
ALUMNI RESOURCES FOR LOCAL COLLEGES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

AIR

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Dr. J. A. Lucas, Director
Planning and Institutional
Research

William Rainey Harper College
Roselle and Algonquin Roads
Palatine, Illinois 60067
Telephone: 312-397-3000

HE 017 492



THE ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

This paper was presented at the Twenty-Fourth Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at the Hyatt-Regency in Fort Worth, Texas, May 6-9, 1984. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum papers.

Daniel R. Coleman, Chairman
Forum Publication
Advisory Committee

ABSTRACT

In a scarce resource environment, the administration of any college is always looking for additional aid. Unlike large universities, local colleges generally do not have alumni who can donate large sums of money, but local colleges do have an advantage in that large proportions of their alumni continue to live close to them. This project identified one class of alumni six years later who would provide a variety of volunteer services for their local college. Finally, the project attempted to evaluate if the benefit derived from these services would be worth the cost of identifying these resources on a regular basis.

Historically, university alumni associations were first formed to provide service for their members and then later took on the role of raising funds for their university (Foreman, 1979). In recent years, alumni associations have been moving more into the mainstream of university life. One manifestation of this trend has been the emergence of an organized program of volunteer services for the institution. A national survey of alumni directors (Blakely, 1979) at 132 state universities and colleges indicated the new trends among the associations included the use of alumni to help in recruitment and in supplying opinions about the value of student life and learning taking place on campus. In an era of scarce resources, a cadre of skilled volunteers can fill some real needs as well as provide an enhancement of a college's basic programs and services.

Zagoren (1982) describes how 13 schools use alumni to help in their student career assistance programs. Alumni at these colleges speak to student groups about their careers, interview students about their career plans and provide externship job opportunities for students while they are enrolled. The colleges involved were Iowa State, Smith College, Swarthmore, Colgate, Douglass College, Bryn Mawr, Barnard College, Baldwin School, Dane Hall School, Cranbrook School and Kingswood School.

A number of colleges start building the alumni habit while students are still enrolled (Purpura, 1980). In these cases current student alumni groups work with the alumni in providing varying services for their college. These services range from serving on panel discussions with alumni on recruiting visits, conducting campus tours for prospective students, helping the alumni association with some on-campus project or hosting alumni who are on campus to help with the student career assistance program. The college

programs described here represent Clemson, Cornell, Northwestern, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Yale, University of Michigan, Brown, and Iowa State.

In a different kind of program, senior citizens came to the University of Toronto (Gleberzon, 1981) and formed their own independent group as a sub-unit of the alumni association. This group started out offering seminars to senior citizens on a number of subjects, many of which suggested various volunteer opportunities in which they could participate. Eventually, the group's activities evolved into direct volunteer work for the University of Toronto. The help they offered included serving on advisory committees, teaching English as a second language, assisting in career planning for students, acting as guides for campus tours and helping out in various offices.

The success of these programs just described depends to a great extent on good coordination. There is a need to maintain good records of alumni or potential volunteers, a need to screen volunteers and identify ways in which each person could contribute, a need to convince staff and faculty on the campus of the worthiness of the volunteer services and finally a linking of the volunteer to the service needed. In the Zagoren study, volunteers played an important role in aiding the alumni office in this vital coordination effort. Students played a major role in coordinating efforts described in the Purpura article, and senior citizens at the University of Toronto cited by Gleberzon were completely self-supporting and coordinated their entire volunteer effort.

Indirect evidence for the need for good coordination comes from a study done among alumni at the University of Pittsburgh (Baum, 1973). This study found that although few alumni participated in the association's activities,

it was not because they disagreed with what the association was doing or with the direction being taken by the University. In fact, the study showed considerable alumni support for the University. The problem of poor participation in alumni activities seemed more related to lack of coordination and follow through.

The previous examples describe colleges or universities with national reputations and alumni associations of long standing. However, Empire State (Brockman, 1982) has shown non-traditional colleges can also build successful alumni organizations to provide direct services to the college. In this situation, alumni work out of regional centers to help with recruiting, sponsor internships, help in the career assistance programs, conduct non-credit seminars for students and participate in governance. Volunteers also provide coordination assistance and work very closely with the faculty, which is the only source of loyalty for a non-traditional institution.

It is interesting to note that almost all the articles written about alumni service to the institution concern colleges with national reputations, most of whose alumni are scattered throughout the nation and thus cannot conveniently provide a service. In contrast, local colleges have most of their alumni living close by, but little is written about their success in organizing alumni or volunteers to provide direct services to the college. This might be explained in part by the lack of a longstanding alumni association and a strong coordinating base. D'Ambrosio (1978) studied alumni associations in the State University of New York system and found that these associations at community colleges and technical colleges in the system were more apt to place high value on alumni activities such as evaluations of college programs, close cooperation with faculty and students, and awareness of institutional needs. However, in

spite of this attitude, there is no description of actual alumni involvement. McCracken (1980) describes four papers delivered at the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges national convention on this topic. All described the formation of alumni associations, services for alumni and some fund-raising activity but none described organizing any volunteer alumni services for the college.

The references in this study were identified through a computer search of the Educational Research Information Center and the Dissertation Abstract bibliographic data bases. The search was for articles dealing with colleges' use of alumni non-monetary services. The lack of articles describing alumni services for local colleges does not necessarily mean nothing is being done in this area. It could be that alumni services are being used by local colleges through very informal arrangements and little is being written about this activity. Also evident in the bibliographic search was the lack of attention paid to the cost or amount of activity required to coordinate a successful alumni service program or to the value of the services received.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to first determine what alumni service resources were available to local colleges. The next purpose was to determine the coordination effort required to link and orient willing alumni to the staff members at the college who could use their services. The final purpose of this study was to evaluate the benefit of these alumni services to the local college.

Methodology

In order to identify the services that might be available from alumni,

a six-year follow-up study was conducted on a population of students who completed 48 or more semester hours during the 1974-1975 academic year at a large community college in the Chicago suburbs. A long-term follow-up study was used because it would take that period of time for community college alumni to develop skills which would be useful to the college. Since the college already does periodic long-term follow-up studies of its alumni, an item was added to an existing survey (Lucas, 1983). This item asked the alumni if they would be willing to provide a variety of services to the college. Ideas for possible services came from the survey form and a category was provided for listing other services. The 1974-1975 alumni population consisted of 989 students; 543 surveys were returned for a 55 percent response rate.

Names of those alumni who were willing to provide services were passed along to various staff or faculty members at the college who might best use these services. After a six-month period, these staff and faculty members were interviewed as to coordination effort required to reach the alumni and use their services. They were also asked to evaluate how beneficial these services were. A rough cost analysis was done to estimate the cost of the survey and the coordination effort and to place some dollar figure on the services received. Finally, interviews were held with faculty and staff members who have been using alumni services through informal channels over the years.

Results

The long-term follow-up study of 1975 Harper alumni found that respondents were willing to provide the following direct services to Harper College:

<u>Direct Service to Harper</u>	<u>N</u>
Talk to students about their careers either on campus or at their place of business.	100
Serve as examples of career success for use by the	92

Results (continued)

	<u>N</u>
college in advertising and promotion campaigns.	
Make a presentation in a class at Harper about their careers.	65
Serve on advisory committees for academic programs or for institutional concerns.	59
Host students at their business for a day	32
Volunteer for tutoring or helping handicapped students on campus.	21
Provide contacts for employment opportunities for Harper graduates.	16
Provide an internship or lab opportunity at their business for current Harper students.	15
Join Harper's Athletic booster club.	5
Provide contacts for Harper to secure equipment at no cost or at reduced cost.	5
Help solicit funds from business and industry for Educational Foundation projects.	4
Provide contacts leading to short-term professional employment for faculty for the summer or for an academic year leave of absence.	4

The cost of doing the survey was \$5,200 which included clerical costs, postage, telephone calling and professional design and interpretation costs. At this point, the project had yielded only the names of alumni willing to perform specific services. The next step was to send these names to nine administrators and staff members who could appropriately use these identified services. In addition, the author met individually with each of the nine to explain the

project, and then held a group meeting to brainstorm the benefits and limitations of alumni services to the College. Seven of the nine attended the meeting.

The responses to this latter effort were varied. Ten months after the communication, five of the administrators indicated they just did not have time to follow up on the information given to them. Two of them had time only to write a letter to each of the alumni whose names had been given to them. One received no responses while the other received six positive responses to the letter. One alumnus worked for two semesters as a volunteer tutor for disabled students.

Two of the staff worked together and assigned ten of their names (from more than 100 given to them) to a senior citizen who had volunteered services for them. He spent about twelve hours calling following up on the alumni contacts. He found that although all of them were willing to help it was very difficult to get in touch with them and/or find a time when they could come to the college to talk to students about their careers. In the twelve hours, he was able to locate four alumni who could schedule time to work with students. However, this volunteer was then assigned to another project and was never able to follow through to the point of actually utilizing the services of these alumni.

The greatest benefits derived from alumni services so far have occurred through an informal process between faculty and student and through relationships already established during the student's college years. Two programs at Harper regularly relate to their alumni in this manner. For example, Legal Technology uses two alumni regularly to present a guest lecture on their area of expertise each semester in a class. Five other alumni serve on that advisory committee and have helped plan continuing education programs for paralegal professionals.

Still other alumni through their contacts provide 5-20 internships per semester, while others have volunteered to speak about Harper's Legal Technology program to targeted professional and community groups. The Dietary Technology program uses their alumni in a similar manner.

Conclusions

Using follow-up studies to identify alumni volunteers is relatively inexpensive. In the Harper effort, the long term follow-up study for one graduating class cost just over \$5,000, but the results were used for many more purposes than just identifying alumni services available. If one assumed that only ten percent of the total purpose of the long term follow-up study was to link alumni names to specific services which they could provide, then the allocated cost for this purpose would be only about \$500.

If identification of alumni services were to be an ongoing process, a filing system (either manual or computer) would have to be established to store these volunteer resources in a systematic way.

The possible benefits which can be derived from alumni services are substantial. This was illustrated by the description of how the Legal Technology program at Harper uses their alumni and by the examples cited in the literature search.

The key, however, to any successful alumni volunteer program seems to be effective coordination. With an established relationship as happens between faculty and students in small closely knit academic programs, and without well-staffed alumni offices, volunteer coordination seems to be required. Otherwise, the cost of coordination appears to exceed the benefits received

from the alumni services. Effective coordination includes initial contact (and this sometimes takes considerable effort) and screening to see if the hours alumni are available and the skills they have match the needs of the particular department or office. Also required would be orientation, training (if needed) and scheduling alumni volunteers for a specific task. Finally, the coordinator needs to follow up from time to time to see if the service provided is satisfactory and if the volunteer is satisfied.

In the case of large universities, sometimes this coordination effort is carried out by alumni office staff, but there are numerous examples of the coordination effort successfully administered by volunteers. Examples of the latter are the service projects of senior citizens at the University of Toronto alumni in the thirteen college study done by Zagoren and students at the eight colleges described by Purpura. There seems to be no literature describing successful coordination of alumni services by regular faculty and staff. Therefore, for local colleges with small or non existent alumni offices and thousands of alumni living close by, successfully linking the alumni's willingness to serve and the services needed at the college appears to depend on harnessing an effective corps of volunteers to provide this coordination function.

References

- Baum, M., and Jameson, B. "A Survey of the Alumni of the University of Pittsburgh: Relationship to Alumni Activity and Opinions about the University." University Urban Interface Program Report, Pittsburgh University, January, 1973.
- Blakely, B. "Alumni Administration at State Colleges and Universities. An Analysis of Current Perspectives and Practices in Alumni Administration: The Results of a National Survey." Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, Washington, D. C., 1979.
- Brockman, J. "Bucking Convention: The Making of an Association for Nontraditional Alumni and Students." Case Currents, 1982, 8 (7), 44-47.
- D'Ambrosio, J. "A Study of Alumni Programming Goals at Units of State University of New York," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Graduate School of Education, State University of New York at Albany, 1978.
- Foreman, R. "Alumni Relations Moving into the Mainstream." Case Currents, 5 (5), 1979, 6-9.
- Gleberzon, W. "Senior Partners." Case Currents, 8(6), 50-52.
- Lucas, J. "Six-Year Follow-up Study of 1975 Alumni and Stopouts." Office of Planning and Research Series, William Rainey Harper College, Vol. 12, No. 6, May 16, 1983.
- McCracken, J. and others. Papers presented at the 60th annual convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, San Francisco March 30-April 2, 1980.
- Purpura, M. "Building the Alumni Habit: A Round Up of Lively Student-Alumni Programs." Case Currents, 1980, 6(5), 14-19.
- Zagoren, A. "Involving Alumni in Career Assistance Programs," Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, Washington, D. C., 1982.